

# MILKEN FAMILY FOUNDATION NATIONAL EDUCATOR AWARDS FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## 1. What is a Milken Educator Award?

The Milken Family Foundation National Educator Award provides public recognition and an unrestricted financial prize of \$25,000 to elementary and secondary school teachers, principals and other education professionals who are furthering excellence in education.

## 2. How are Milken Educators selected?

Based on guidelines established by the Milken Family Foundation (see FAQ #3), the department of education in each of the 48 participating states and the District of Columbia appoints an independent blue-ribbon committee to recommend candidates for selection to the Foundation. There is no nomination or application procedure for the Award.

## 3. What are the criteria for selection?

- Exceptional educational talent as evidenced by outstanding instructional practices and student learning results in the classroom and school;
- Exemplary educational accomplishments beyond the classroom that provide models of excellence for the profession;
- Strong long-range potential for professional and policy leadership;
- Engaging and inspiring presence that motivates and impacts students, colleagues and the community.

## 4. How are the Awards announced?

The main element is surprise! Each fall, newly selected recipients are taken completely by surprise at schoolwide assemblies. With an entourage of media and distinguished officials, a Foundation representative or the state chief of education typically notifies the recipient, often accompanied by the governor and other state leaders.

## 5. Are the recipients required to do anything specific with their monetary awards?

Milken Educators may use their **unrestricted** \$25,000 Awards in any way they wish. A Foundation survey found that the largest number of past recipients have used their Awards to finance their children's education or their own continuing education. Others have purchased equipment for their schools, funded scholarships for their students, and even financed the adoption of children.

## 6. When do the recipients receive their monetary prize?

Recipients are notified of the Award in the fall. The following May, they will participate in the Milken Family Foundation National Education Conference in Washington, D.C. During the National Education Conference, recipients attend an inspiring and emotional awards ceremony at which recipients receive their \$25,000 checks.

## 7. Are both elementary and secondary school educators selected each year?

The Award alternates each year between elementary and secondary educators.

**8. What other benefits besides the \$25,000 do recipients receive?**

- Professional development opportunities and public recognition at Notification events and the annual Milken Family Foundation National Education Conference;
- Membership in state and national networks of nearly 2,100 distinguished educators, including the Milken Educator listserv;
- Opportunity to participate in ongoing projects such as Milken Festival for Youth and *The Children of Willesden Lane*.

**9. Why does the program put such an emphasis on teacher quality?**

Recognizing and rewarding quality educators has been a hallmark of the Milken Educator Awards program since its inception. However, as the lack of advancement opportunities drives classroom teachers out of the profession and fewer young people pursue a career in education, the nation faces a potentially catastrophic shortage of quality classroom teachers. Over the next 10 years, schools will need to hire over two million new teachers, but will come up short by more than a third. Studies show that only one in 10 college-bound high school students are strongly interested in teaching as a career, due in part to competition from the private sector, which is having a particularly damaging effect on the supply of science and math teachers.

In 1999, Milken Family Foundation Chairman and Co-Founder Lowell Milken introduced the Teacher Advancement Program (TAP), a comprehensive strategy for restructuring the education profession to attract, develop, motivate and retain quality teachers. TAP works by integrating four elements: multiple career paths, ongoing applied professional growth, instructionally focused accountability and performance-based compensation. TAP is currently at work in more than 100 campuses, impacting over 45,000 students and 3,100 teachers.

**10. What are the other areas of interest of the Milken Family Foundation?**

The Milken Family Foundation was established in 1982 to discover and advance inventive ways of helping people help themselves and those around them lead productive and satisfying lives. The Santa Monica, Calif.-based foundation advances this mission primarily through its work in education and medical research. Milken Family Foundation initiatives include:

- American Epilepsy Society/Milken Family Foundation Epilepsy Research Award, Grant & Fellowship Program
- *The Children of Willesden Lane* curriculum guide
- Jewish Educator Awards
- Mike's Math Club
- Milken Archive of American Jewish Music
- Milken Festival for Youth
- Milken Institute, an economic think tank focusing on jobs and capital issues
- Milken Scholars
- Prostate Cancer Foundation
- Teacher Advancement Program (TAP) Foundation

**11. Does the Milken Family Foundation have a Web site?**

Yes -- [www.mff.org](http://www.mff.org). For additional questions, call the Milken Family Foundation at (310) 570-4775.